

ZAKARIA RAMHANI

B. 1983 in Tangier, Morocco

Zakaria Ramhani was born in Tangier in 1983. The son of a painter, he discovered very early the different painting techniques in his father's studio. Deeply influenced by the way the religious conservatives criticized his father for making figurative art, Zakaria Ramhani chose to use and transform the Islamic tradition of calligraphy, whose abstract nature allowed artists to avoid violating the prohibition against figurative representation. Zakaria Ramhani got his diploma to become a fine art teacher in Tangier in 2003, and worked as a teacher, before giving up his work to devote himself entirely to his paintings. In his own words he speaks very candidly about his work:

"I do not paint; I create faces, emotions and moods in my mother tongue.

I see the painting in the history of Western art as a possibility and not finality.

I see my approach as an encounter of artistic legacies from different civilizations.

My work is primarily based on the use of writing, calligraphy and letters in Arabic, sometimes juxtaposed in French or English, to create figurative paintings- most of which are dedicated to portraits.

I can recall becoming fascinated and intrigued by figurative paintings and portraits at a very young age through the practice of my father who is also a painter. I quickly realized this particular practice was against aniconism in Islam and is also found in Judaism. I remember my father praying to Allah for forgiveness when he agreed to make a portrait, which was often commissioned, before a ban imposed on himself from painting all living things in our neighborhood. Some faithful believers had an understanding of the soothsayer's message and refused to speak to him because they thought he was committing a great sin. This guilt that I probably inherited naturally nourishes a desire to re-invent a unique way of painting in order to create a representation while not being fearful.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2014, *Connotation*, Artspace Dubai Gallery. Dubai, UAE
2013, *May Allah Forgive me*, Julie Meneret Contemporary Art, New York, USA
2012, *My Face is a Word*, Atelier 21, Casablanca, Morocco
Zoom Art Fair, Miami, USA.
Faces of Your Other: Atelier 21, Casablanca, Morocco
Tabari Artspace Dubai, UAE
2009, *From Right to Left*, Centre d'Exposition Val-d'Or, Quebec, Canada
2008, *Faces of Your Other*, Artspace, Dubai, UAE
2006, *Le temps de la mort*, Galerie de la Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, France
2006, *Corps possédés/Solitude collective*, Galerie Crous des Beaux Arts, Paris, France

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2014, Art Toronto art fair. Metro Toronto Convention Centre, Toronto
2014, *Memory, Place, Desire*, Cantor Fitzgerald Gallery, Haverford College, Haverford, USA
curated by Carole Solomone
2014, Tabari Artspace Dubai, UAE
2014, Art 14 London Art Fair, London, UK
2013, *25 Years of Arabic Creativity*, Emirate Palace, Abu Dhabi, UAE
2013, Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, France
2013, National Museum of Bahrain, Manama, Bahrain
2013, Art 13 Art Fair, London, UK
2013, Tabari Artspace Dubai, UAE
2013, Atelier 21, Casablanca, Morocco
2012, Barbican Centre, London, UK. Curated by Vincenzo Sanfo
2012, Art Dubai, Contemporary Art Fair, UAE
2011, Marrakech Art Fair, Morocco, Art Dubai, UAE
2010, Marrakech Art Fair, Morocco, Art Dubai, UAE
2009, *Made in Arnhem*, International Festival of the Arts, Arnhem, Netherlands
2009, *On the Ground, Underground*, Intramoenia ExtrArt (Collaboration with Achille Bonito Oliva),
Barletta, Italy - Art Dubai, UAE
2008, the 11 Cairo Biennale, Egypt
2008 Dak'Art, 8th Biennale of Contemporary African Art, Dakar, Senegal

2008, Art Dubai, UAE

2008, Word into Art : Artists of the Modern Middle East, British Museum at DIFC, Dubai, UAE

Curated by Venetia Porter.

RESIDENCIES

2013, Reis Studios, New York, USA

2008, Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, France

2006, Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, France

GRANTS

French Embassy in Morocco, Exchange Program with the Moroccan Cultural Ministry

COLLECTIONS

Vanhaerents Art Collection, Belgium

Alain-Dominique Perrin Collection, Paris, France

Barjeel Foundation Collection, Sharjah, UAE

Jean-Paul Blachère Collection, France

Bank Al-Maghreb Museum, Morocco

Banque Populaire Collection, Morocco

Royal Family Collection, Morocco

SELECTED PRESS

Al-Jazeera America, Interview, November 6th 2014

Wall Street International, "Summer 2013 Group Exhibition", July 17th 2013

New York Times, "Creating Art as Witness to Arab Spring" by Rana F. Sweis, April 4th 2012

The Art Newspaper, "Art Dubai Keeps Strong Regional Identity" by Georgina Adam, March 22nd 2012

New York Times, "Creating a Place for Contemporary Art" by Vinita Bharadwaj, March 21st 2012

BBC News, "Arab Spring inspires regional artists" by Sylvia Smith, April 22nd 2011

CNN, "Artists reflect Egypt's revolutionary spirit" by Neil Curry, April 11th 2011

BLOUIN ArtInfo, "Between an Artistic Oasis & a Mirage: Impressions of Art Dubai 2011" by Ben Davis, March 22nd 2011

Le Parisien, "Dubai: deux tableaux sur le printemps arabe retirés de la Foire d'art contemporain", March 22nd 2011

Artprice, "Top 10 Artists Under 30", March 9th 2010

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